



State of California
Respiratory Care Board

444 North 3rd Street, Suite 270
Sacramento, CA 95814
Telephone (916) 323-9983
Fax (916) 323-9999
www.rcb.ca.gov



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Inquiry: As a Healthcare Risk Manager, I interested in the Board's position that a Respiratory Therapist may deliver non-respiratory medications, i.e., instilling ophthalmic ointment. After reviewing various portions of the Respiratory Care Practice Act, I saw repeated references to medications and treatments, etc., all seeming to relate in some way to the respiratory system. In a delivery room setting, it seems likely the Respiratory Therapist would be in a position to deliver respiratory medications and perhaps other emergency resuscitation medications to a neonate. I am unclear how eye ointment could be considered related to an emergency resuscitation or respiratory care, so I am trying to be sure our legal bases are covered if we allow Neonatal Respiratory Therapists to administer non-respiratory and non-resuscitative medications.

Response: It is the intent of the Respiratory Care practice act recognizes the existence of overlapping functions between physicians and surgeons, registered nurses, physical therapists, respiratory care practitioners, and other licensed health care personnel to permit additional sharing of functions within organized health care systems (3701, Article 1, General Provisions). This provision is not specific to respiratory functions and was intended to allow greater functionality within a licensed health care facility. Because of this provision the delivery of non-respiratory medications including ophthalmic ointment would qualify as an overlapping function and is considered acceptable.

Reference # 2002-C-05